

**MINUTES
MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SPECIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**DETERMINATION OF THE REQUEST FROM THE BLACKFEET
NATION TO REPATRIATE A SPLIT HORN BONNET TO THEM UNDER
NAGPRA LAW**

**February 3, 2011
Auditorium at MHS, Helena, Montana**

Montana Historical Society Board of Trustees members present: Jim Murry, Steve Lozar, Lee Rostad, Crystal Wong Shors and on Telephone Conference: Jim Utterback, Sharon Lincoln, Janene Caywood, Bob Brown, Kent Kleinkopf and Jack Lepley. **Excused from the meeting were:** MHS Board of Trustee members Steve Carney, Jim Court, Shirley Groff, Thomas Nygard and Ed Smith.

Staff present: MHS Interim Director, Mike Cooney; MHS Administrative Assistant, Renee Podell; MHS Centralized Services Administrator, Denise King; MHS Museum Curator of Collections, Jennifer Bottomly-O'Looney; MHS Museum Administrative Assistant Karen Rouns; MHS Museum Assistant Registrar Rowena Harrington; MHS Museum Collections Manager, Amanda Streeter-Trum; MHS Museum Technician Vic Reiman; MHS Museum Exhibit Specialist, Roberta Jones-Wallace; and MHS Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Stan Wilmoth.

Guests present: Calvin Williams, Calvin's grandchildren, Peter Sibley, Susie Gratz and a large audience of the public was in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

President Jim Murry called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Steve Lozar presented the prayer.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEE ACTION ON THE DETERMINATION OF THE REQUEST
FROM THE BLACKFEET NATION TO REPATRIATE A SPLIT HORN BONNET TO
THEM UNDER NAGPRA LAW-Jennifer Bottomly-O'Looney**

Jennifer Bottomly-O'Looney gave a brief explanation of NAGPRA law and described the process for addressing repatriation claims presented to the Montana Historical Society (handout presented has been made a permanent part of the record). She noted that the MHS collections management policy clearly states that as is the case with all collections acquired, managed and cared for by the Museum Program, the Society accedes to NAGPRA and all other state and federal laws and international conventions governing specific collection types and materials.

Jennifer outlined the process for addressing requests for repatriation as prescribed by NAGPRA law. She stated that a formal letter of request was received by MHS. It was signed by Willie A. Sharp, Chairman of the Blackfeet Nation to repatriate the split horn bonnet headdress that has been at MHS since 1892.

Society staff and members of the MHS Board of Trustees' executive committee met with John Murray, Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and members of a delegation from the Horn Society, where it was explained the importance of the bonnet for use in their current Horn Society ceremonies. They presented a compelling argument for their request for repatriation under the NAGPRA rule. It was determined by MHS staff, pursuant NAGPRA law, this split horn bonnet is a specific ceremonial object needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of tradition Native American religion by present-day adherents. Jennifer explained it is recommended that this headdress be deaccessioned from the permanent Museum Collection and returned to the Blackfeet Nation of Montana.

Jennifer noted that Society staff did not undertake this request lightly. This split horn bonnet has been in the care of the MHS Museum Collection for 119 years.

Steve Lozar spoke on behalf of the Salish Kootenai Tribes. He is a tribal councilman. Steve stated he is absolutely honored and his heart is blessed today. This action has not been taken lightly. The MHS staff and Board of Trustees have looked with great focus on this and with open heart. Steve thanked the staff and the members of the BOT for bringing balance of spirit, mind and body. Staff and the BOT have gone a long ways towards granting balance to our brothers in the north. This is reuniting a holy object with a holy group of people. Steve said that this is an important day, a blessed and spiritual day. **Steve Lozar moved for repatriation of the split horn bonnet to the Blackfeet and to all the members of the Blackfoot confederacy. Crystal Wong Shors seconded the motion.** Jack Lepley asked President Murry who would be responsible for the care of the bonnet. President Murry asked Jennifer Bottomly-O'Looney to respond. Jennifer stated that the bonnet will be turned over to John Murray, Blackfeet Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for care. Jack Lepley asked where the bonnet will be held. Jennifer said it will be given to the Blackfeet Tribe in Browning, Montana. Jennifer asked Calvin Williams, member of the Horn Society to speak. Calvin Williams stated the care of the bonnet will be with Flying Low which is John Murray's Blackfoot name. Discussion was held on the bonnet going to Canada in the upcoming summer. Kent Kleinkopf joined the telephone conference. He stated he was traveling through Browning, Montana and was out of cell phone range. Jim Utterback announced he had to leave the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Calvin Williams spoke to the gathering stating that the young children present today for this action are the future. We have the opportunity today to give the future support and the support to guide them and to lead them in the right direction. He said we can never go wrong with prayer. Calvin noted that sometimes technology takes us away from the basics, the source of life. Native spirituality is very simple but yet it is very complex. We include the cosmos and believe in the power of a higher being. Calvin Williams sang a song of blessing. He said that in the future the Horn Society children will be singing the song of blessing and they will be wearing the headdress and helping each other and all nationalities.

Peter Sibley, resident of Jefferson County, he thanked the Historic Society for the decision to repatriate the bonnet.

Susie Gratz, thanked the Society for the care provided for the headdress and for the careful consideration and decision provided today.

President Murry called for a vote. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.